

December 21, 2004

The Honorable Board of Supervisors
County of Los Angeles
Room 383, Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration
500 West Temple Street
Los Angeles, California 90012

Marcia Mayeda
Director

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Shelter locations

11258 S. Garfield Ave.
Downey, CA 90242
(562) 940-6898

216 W. Victoria St.
Gardena, CA 90248
(310) 523-9566

4275 No. Elton
Baldwin Park, CA 91706
(626) 962-3577

5210 W. Avenue I
Lancaster, CA 93536
(661) 940-4191

31044 N. Charlie Cyn. Rd.
Castaic, CA 91384
(661) 257-3191

29525 Agoura Rd.
Agoura, CA 91301
(818) 991-0071

Dear Supervisors:

**REQUEST FOR APPROVAL TO CONTRACT
WITH TEMPORARY PERSONNEL SERVICES
FOR VETERINARY MEDICAL STAFFING
3 VOTES**

IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT YOUR BOARD:

a Authorize the Department of Animal Care and Control to contract with a veterinary staffing firm to provide temporary relief services while the Department seeks to fill current and pending veterinarian vacancies in the Department.

JUSTIFICATION FOR RECOMMENDED ACTION

The Department is budgeted for six shelter veterinarians. One position is currently vacant and another position is open because the doctor occupying it is on extended medical leave and the position will become vacant early next year with the retirement of the incumbent.

The situation created by these existing and pending vacancies, which constitute one-third of the Department's veterinary medical positions, puts Los Angeles County at risk of noncompliance with California law with respect to the required level of shelter animal care and treatment.

Los Angeles County government salaries for veterinarians are among the lowest in Southern California, making it difficult to recruit and hire these doctors. Animal Shelter medicine is often a less attractive career choice for veterinarians, which further complicates hiring for those positions.

The Department is currently working with the Department of Human Resources on a long-term solution to this problem. In the meantime, the Department seeks Board authorization to contract with a veterinary services firm to provide temporary veterinary medical staffing until the structural problem can be successfully addressed.

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Implementation of Strategic Plan Goals

This request relates to the County's goals of organizational effectiveness and service excellence.

FISCAL IMPACT

Typically, relief veterinarians are paid approximately \$500 per day. They do not receive benefits.

The Department will pay all costs associated with the request through salary savings created by the open veterinary medical positions and other funding and is not seeking any supplementary budget adjustment in connection with this request.

FACTS AND PROVISIONS

California law requires all public animal shelters to provide a higher level of care and medical intervention than was the case before 1998, when the law was amended. Furthermore, ever since 2000, public animal shelters have been required to spay and neuter all animals made available for placement, and this surgery can only be performed by licensed veterinarians.

However, because the County salary schedule for veterinarians is significantly below that of other agencies in Southern California and because of the specialized nature of animal shelter medicine, it is quite difficult for the Department to recruit and retain qualified veterinarians.

The Department is concerned that, if the level of veterinary medical care falls below standards imposed by California law, the County could be exposed to legal action.

LEGAL REQUIREMENTS

California Civil Code Section 1846 and Food and Agriculture Section 30520 combine to require increased an increased level of medical care provided to animals housed in public shelters in the state.

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These laws also have subjected public shelters to a higher level of scrutiny than in the past and have prompted lawsuits against agencies in other parts of the state for noncompliance.

IMPACT ON CURRENT SERVICES

Approval for authority to contract with veterinary relief service will enable the Department to maintain the level of care provided to the animals at the Department's shelters and reduce the risk of legal action against Los Angeles County for failure to comply with California law pertaining to veterinary medical care for animals housed at public shelters.

Respectfully submitted

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M Mayeda", is positioned above the printed name and title.

Marcia Mayeda
Director

c: Chief Administrative Officer
County Counsel
Executive Officer
Auditor-Controller